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1. A method for treating or preventing congestive heart failure in a mammal, said method comprising administering a polypeptide comprising an epidermal growth factor-like (EGF-like) domain to said mammal, wherein said EGF-like domain is encoded by a neuregulin gene, wherein said administering is
5 in an amount effective to treat or prevent heart failure in said mammal.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said neuregulin gene is the NRG-1 gene.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said polypeptide is encoded by the NRG-1 gene.

10 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said polypeptide is recombinant human GGF2.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said neuregulin gene is the NRG-2 gene.

15 6. The method of claim 5, wherein said polypeptide is encoded by the NRG-2 gene.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said neuregulin gene is the NRG-3 gene.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said polypeptide is encoded by the

~~NRG 3 gene~~

3 ~~9~~. The method of claim 1, wherein said mammal is a human.

4 ~~10~~. The method of claim 1, wherein said congestive heart failure results from hypertension; ischemic heart disease; exposure to a cardiotoxic compound;
5 myocarditis; thyroid disease; viral infection; gingivitis; drug abuse; alcohol abuse; pericarditis; atherosclerosis; vascular disease; hypertrophic cardiomyopathy; acute myocardial infarction; left ventricular systolic dysfunction; coronary bypass surgery; starvation; an eating disorder; or a genetic defect.

6 ~~11~~. The method of claim ~~10~~⁴, wherein said mammal has undergone a
10 myocardial infarction.

7 ~~12~~. The method of claim ~~10~~⁴, wherein said cardiotoxic compound is an anthracycline; alcohol; or cocaine.

8 ~~13~~. The method of claim ~~12~~⁶, wherein said anthracycline is doxorubicin,
15 or daunomycin.

9 ~~14~~. The method of claim ~~13~~⁷, wherein an anti-ErbB2 or anti-HER2 antibody is administered to said mammal before, during, or after anthracycline administration.

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⁹~~15~~. The method of claim ⁴~~10~~, wherein said cardiotoxic compound is an anti-ErbB2 or anti-HER2 antibody.

16. The method of claim 14 or 15, wherein said anti-ErbB2 or anti-HER2 antibody is HERCEPTIN®.

5 ¹⁰~~17~~. The method of claim ⁴~~10~~, wherein said polypeptide is administered prior to exposure to said cardiotoxic compound.

¹¹~~18~~. The method of claim ⁴~~10~~, wherein said polypeptide is administered during exposure to said cardiotoxic compound.

10 ¹²~~19~~. The method of claim ⁴~~10~~, wherein said polypeptide is administered after exposure to said cardiotoxic compound.

¹³~~20~~. The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is administered prior to the diagnosis of congestive heart failure in said mammal.

¹⁴~~21~~. The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is administered after the diagnosis of congestive heart failure in said mammal.

15 ¹⁵~~22~~. The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is administered to a mammal that has undergone compensatory cardiac hypertrophy.

¹⁶~~23~~. The method of claim 1, wherein administration of said polypeptide

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maintains left ventricular hypertrophy.

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24. The method of claim 1, wherein said method prevents progression of myocardial thinning.

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25. The method of claim 1, wherein administration of said polypeptide
5 inhibits cardiomyocyte apoptosis.

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26. The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is administered by administering an expression vector encoding said polypeptide to said mammal.

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